

[Things that keep you up at night](#) by [Luddleston](#)

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Summary:

Geralt is injured. This is not new.

Jaskier is trying to help. This is.

Things that keep you up at night

Author's Note:

I dunno man. I got to the part in the wild hunt where Geralt tells Ciri no witcher has ever died in his own bed and it made me feel some feelings.

I also have many Thoughts re: what does having such a low heart rate do to you and I need to share them with the world.

It had taken the better part of the evening, but Geralt had finally convinced the local excuse for a physician to stop prodding him and let him go nurse his wounds himself. Turns out, having to negotiate his own freedom from medical care was exhausting, as was being repeatedly asked what the *hell* bit him, and how he wasn't dead. For some people, "a monster with sharp teeth," and, "I'm a witcher" did not suffice. Geralt had managed to find himself there on a slow day (although, this was the countryside in Velen, all days were slow days) which meant the physician and his nurse both wanted to hear the long, drawn-out version, and Geralt was forced to tell them because the bandages and poultices he needed were being held for ransom.

At least he was traveling with Jaskier, which meant the details of any additional misadventures would be put to music as they happened, and nobody would ask Geralt to tell the story of it when Jaskier was much more entertaining. It was a comforting thought.

After having finally washed a week's worth of sweat, dirt, and blood (his own and the monsters') off his skin, Geralt was ready to collapse into bed and sleep until midday—even later, if he could manage it. Unfortunately, the bed in the small room he and Jaskier had contributed all their spare cash into renting was already occupied.

It was only Jaskier, but he was taking up the whole mattress, which was already small, and Geralt gave him an ugly look before nudging him aside until there was enough space for a tired witcher. Naturally, this woke Jaskier. Naturally, he made a show of it, freezing and yelping as though a

bandit had entered his room only to take a nap, until he realized it was just Geralt collapsing beside him.

Jaskier cleared his throat, collecting himself. Geralt sank into the mattress and wrinkled his nose. It smelled like the last seven occupants, and hay. The hay was pleasant. The last seven occupants had not been.

"Ah. Geralt. You're back. As you can see, I have been keeping everything warm and comfortable."

Geralt did not care to use words, and only responded with a grunt. He pulled the blanket over his head. It did not stop Jaskier from speaking, and it did not stop Geralt from hearing him.

"I was *not* going to bed early, I will have you know. I was planning to perform longer, but I have become afflicted with a sore throat, no doubt because of the cold and constant dampness of this place."

Bad night, then. While some of these country towns found Jaskier the most exciting thing to ever grace their muddy streets, others couldn't give a shit about some bard singing of adventure and romance, the likes of which they would never see. Lately, it had been more of the former and less of the latter, Jaskier's reputation having improved, but there were still some who would rather listen to a gaggle of inebriated farmers singing drinking songs.

Geralt had nothing conciliatory to say, so he slowed his breathing and settled into place, regretting his choice of side of the bed, because in order to not stare Jaskier in the face, he had to lie on his injured side.

"I know you're not asleep." Jaskier prodded at his shoulder, and Geralt just barely managed to keep from twitching. "Even you can't pass out that quickly. Geralt. Hey, Geralt."

"I would be asleep if not for you."

Jaskier moved on to flicking his ear instead, which was increasingly unpleasant, and Geralt twisted so that he could rotate his shoulder back and elbow Jaskier in the ribs. He got an affronted squawk for his troubles.

"Stop that, I haven't injured you." Geralt knew now to only treat Jaskier with a fifth of his full strength because bards were delicate as flowers whose petals could be crushed by the uncaring hands of a brute such as he, or something. He reached back, arm at an awkward angle, so that he could pat Jaskier on the spot he'd dug his elbow in.

"I see you don't want to talk," Jaskier said, and the way the mattress shifted under them told Geralt he'd rolled onto his back. "Pity. I was about to try and get the details of that last hunt out of you." Jaskier had, for once in his life, listened to Geralt when he'd said it was too dangerous, and Jaskier needed to stay at the tavern. Maybe he'd found a sense of self-preservation somewhere. Or maybe he really was getting a cold.

Geralt, too, moved to lie on his back, which meant their shoulders pressed together, as the bed was not meant to hold two grown men lying side-by-side. "Tell you later," he said.

Jaskier immediately brightened, turning to face him, propping himself up on one elbow. "Really? I didn't think you would, I mean, you were in such a foul mood—worse than most of the times a monster nearly kills you, but never mind, I shall resign myself to waiting." He lay back down and settled in, as though expecting Geralt to tell it as a bedtime story.

Geralt looked at the ceiling. The beams that held up the peaked roof were bowing in places from carrying years' worth of heavy snowfall, and one directly over their heads had been recently replaced. He didn't look in Jaskier's direction, but he knew he was still being watched.

"I was too slow," Geralt said eventually, his fingers resting just aside of the bright red marks torn into his skin under all the poultices and bandages. "Should've known it'd happen eventually."

He could feel Jaskier shrug next to him. "It happens sometimes. You have off days."

"In my line of work," he explained, "those 'off days' will get you killed. That's how witchers die, they get slow and they get caught." Geralt wasn't

acquainted with many witchers these days, but he'd heard the aphorisms. *No witcher has ever died in his own bed.*

Jaskier whistled, and it was musical even though he was just remarking on the severity of it all.

"What happens next time?" Geralt asked the empty air.

It was Jaskier, not the draft coming in through the window, who responded. "Well, you'll wait a bit, before there's a next time," he said. "Until this heals—" his hand brushed Geralt's shirt over the spot where the bandages were tied, but didn't touch the injury itself, "—and this, too." He reached over Geralt for his sword arm, taking his wrist, fingers grazing his skin just shy of the half-healed burn that still pulled painfully every time Geralt moved too quickly. "That's what's slowing you down, right?"

"It shouldn't," Geralt said. "Ten, twenty years ago, it wouldn't have." Jaskier's fingers—cold because of the poorly-insulated building, calloused from his nonstop lute-playing—drifted down further. His palm lay over the back of Geralt's hand, and his fingers curled around the heel of it to grip a bit tighter before nearly letting go.

Before he could slip away, Geralt's fingers curled in, and as soon as he held on, Jaskier stopped trying to pull back. He allowed Geralt to change his grip, to lace their fingers together instead of awkwardly clasping hands.

"Maybe you just need somebody to watch your back," Jaskier said.

"Meaning yourself?" Geralt tugged Jaskier's hand closer. When his fingers bumped Geralt's cheek, he loosened himself from Geralt's grip to brush the hair off his temple.

"No, are you kidding me? I'd get us both killed."

"You could distract them," Geralt said, his voice muffled as he turned his face into the smooth, warm skin of Jaskier's wrist. He could tell that Jaskier hadn't applied any additional cologne after he'd bathed. He wore several different scents, changing them at whim, and Geralt found all of them

overpowering. Even now, after he'd bathed, cinnamon and clove clung to his skin. He'd smelled like a rich dessert when he first put it on, cloying enough to make Geralt wish he could shut off his nose for a while.

"My talents are indeed a distraction—Geralt, are you *nuzzling* me? You're like a cat."

"Absolutely not," he said, giving Jaskier no indication as to what part of that sentence he had been objecting to. He pressed his lips to Jaskier's wrist, then his palm, gentle enough that it couldn't be called a kiss. An involuntary shiver ran through Jaskier anyway. It was something that an ordinary person wouldn't be able to feel. Geralt was extraordinary enough that the tremor was at the forefront of his senses.

"Hello? Geralt? Very important question here: what the *hell* are you doing?"

It was a decent question. Geralt, unfortunately, had no answer.

Most people met Geralt and determined that he was not the kind of person who liked to be touched, snuggled, or otherwise caressed. Jaskier had done the same, and then summarily decided to ignore that facet of Geralt's personality. He'd throw an arm around Geralt's shoulders while pulling him away from irritated townsfolk, lean up against him as he played an upbeat tune and tried to get Geralt to join in. Hell, Jaskier had even hugged him once, when he was giddy on an adrenaline high from almost but not quite getting killed by a ghoul.

This, however, was uncharted territory. Well, mostly so. They had been camped on a trade route a few weeks ago, and Jaskier had gone down to some other encampment to "mingle," leaving Geralt to tend to his armor in peace. He'd returned two hours later with a small but half-empty bottle of Temerian rye, clearly having drunk the other half, because he'd already been wobbling.

Geralt had seen Jaskier tipsy on many an occasion, but never far gone enough to plop himself into Geralt's lap, telling him to stop sharpening his sword, that was boring, and would he just drink this instead? Geralt had obliged, then told him it was terrible, and Jaskier had shouted (even though

Geralt was the only one around), *"finally, someone else who knows what they're talking about!"* And then, with the kind of enthusiasm only a drunkard could possess, he'd smacked a kiss on Geralt's mouth, rolled off him, nearly hit the lantern, and passed out.

Needless to say, Jaskier did not remember that occasion. And so: uncharted territory.

Geralt was good with uncharted territory. Usually, it meant an unmapped sewer or elven ruin or elven ruin in a sewer, but he was certain enough he could figure out this proverbial series of underground tunnels just as easily.

On second thought, maybe he shouldn't be comparing a relationship with a human being to fighting monsters in a sewer. It was unfair, really. Made fighting monsters in a sewer seem much worse than it was. He'd much rather have a contract for a hundred drowners and a few water hags thrown in for good measure than have to deal with the way Jaskier was looking at him, eyes a little too wide, breathing a little too quick, waiting raptly for Geralt's next move.

The problem was that Geralt did not have a next move planned. He could think ten steps ahead in any swordfight because he'd had it drilled into his head for a lifetime and a half, but surprise, surprise, witchers didn't teach you how to deal with how it felt to be caught in the intersection between friendship and romance.

Fuck. This was why Geralt didn't *have* romances. He dropped Jaskier's hand, fully intending on rolling over and going back to sleep and making this something they never spoke of again. Jaskier moved before Geralt could, propped himself up on an elbow so that he had to lean down to kiss him, slower and with much more finesse than that forgotten first one months ago. Bold move. But what else was one to expect from Jaskier?

His fingertips were rough on the line of Geralt's collarbone revealed by the undone neckline of his shirt, but his mouth was soft, almost irresistibly so. In fact, Geralt had to do a lot of mental cartwheels convincing himself that he could resist this if he wanted to.

As Jaskier leaned away, he laughed quietly, and Geralt hung onto every note of it, something in his heart moving so fiercely he was certain the medallion hanging over his chest shook with it. This was why he didn't do this with people he knew well. This was why he didn't do this with *friends*, fuck.

Geralt had already almost ruined whatever the hell they had on a number of occasions, most notably: nearly getting Jaskier killed by a djinn, shouting at Jaskier atop a mountain and sending him running, and that time he told Jaskier his new hat looked ridiculous. This was why Geralt was fairly certain that pulling away from Jaskier wouldn't ruin anything too terribly.

He still looked giddy, flushed and grinning and biting his lower lip. When his laughter turned from overflowing pleasure to genuine hilarity over something, Geralt stared at him, trying to determine what it was. Couldn't be his kissing. Geralt knew he must've had some talent there, or he'd never get laid.

"What?" Geralt asked eventually.

"It's just—I'm over here with my heart racing out of my chest and I can't tell if you're affected in the slightest!" Jaskier broke off laughing to sigh, pressing the back of his hand to his forehead in a horizontal attempt at swooning. "Your pulse doesn't even skip a beat!"

It had, Geralt thought, but Jaskier didn't have the senses to notice. And, for Geralt, his heart racing at top speed was still a pace that would spell death for any human. "No. I don't blush, either," he said.

"You like that, don't you?" Jaskier said, and then elaborated. "People not knowing what you're feeling."

"If you take popular opinion, I'm feeling nothing," Geralt replied.

Jaskier scoffed. "I knew that wasn't true after spending an hour with you. Witchers clearly have feelings. Irritation chief among them, if you're any indication, which isn't the most pleasant of emotions, but still. They're present. The feelings. You feel things."

Currently, he felt oddly raw and displaced. He shrank back, pretending to check the wound on his side, which was still doing exactly what it had been before he fell into bed. Bleeding sluggishly. Hurting.

"All right?" Jaskier followed the path of his hand for a second, but then he looked at Geralt's face instead, watching. Too damn observant. *This* was why he shouldn't do this with Jaskier, in particular. Too damn good at reading people. "If it hurts, you can send me rooting around in your bag for potions and bark at me when I pull out the wrong one on the first three tries," he suggested. "Might help get you in a better mood."

Geralt wasn't sure if Jaskier was referring to the potion or the shouting. Physically, shouting would probably not make him feel better, as it would pull at the stitches. "No moving," he sighed.

"You're not listening, *you* don't have to move, I'll go—"

"I don't want you to move, either," he corrected himself. He laid his arm over Jaskier's side, loose enough that he wouldn't disturb the burn on his forearm. And so that Jaskier could get away if he wanted to, if he decided this was too strange and he'd rather make his escape. Not like that would ever happen. Jaskier had already attached himself to Geralt with no intention of leaving.

"Ah, so he admits it," Jaskier said. Geralt's eyes were closed, so he couldn't see the delight on Jaskier's face, but he could hear it. He did not make any expression in response. He had to try hard not to. "You enjoy my company."

"If I didn't, I would have skewered you long ago." Geralt didn't open his eyes.

Jaskier scoffed. "You wouldn't have. I'm too handsome and charming for that." He settled closer to Geralt. Some may have called it cuddling. Geralt would not call it that. "Geralt, you must promise me I won't awake to find you pretending none of this ever happened."

"Alright." He wasn't sure if it was a lie. From the sound of irritation Jaskier made, he was similarly doubtful.

Geralt didn't know if daylight would make it all the more obvious that they shouldn't be doing this. That Jaskier didn't deserve to be stuck with someone who would be killed by some monster before his time, that Geralt couldn't be the heartfelt, romantic lover Jaskier clearly desired. It was equally probable that he would awaken to find that Jaskier had disappeared, flighty thing that he was, and was off continuing to travel, coincidentally in the same direction Geralt was. They would come back together and Jaskier would pass it off as one night of tenderness that would become the subject of a ballad and nothing more concrete.

He couldn't puzzle himself over such impossible things as Jaskier's feelings. Not when he was so tired that thinking of anything beyond the moment made his head ache.

Jaskier began to snore. Geralt wondered when he'd gotten used to sleeping through that.

He awoke to an altogether different realization. It was this:

With the sunlight streaming through the East-facing window and the dust motes caught in it sparkling like fairy dust, the ramshackle Heatherton inn looked like something out of a dream. The most surreal part of it, however, was Jaskier curled at his side, his hand over Geralt's chest, two fingers slipping underneath the chain of his medallion. The bones in his hands caught the light, as did the softer folds of his shirt and the fall of his hair over his brow.

He looked ethereal, like a prince out of a fairy tale.

And then he stretched, and whacked Geralt in the nose as he did.

"Fuck off." Geralt batted his hand away.

"Good morning to you, too," Jaskier mumbled.

Yeah. He could probably handle a few more nights like this one.

Author's Note:

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